

The Morgenthau Plan and its Aftermath

BY JAMES J. MARTIN

THE world respected military historian, Major General J. F. C. Fuller, in his *The Second World War, 1939-1945* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949) described it as the most savage conflict since the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). It was marked by a degree of venomous and malicious vengefulness probably unknown since the genocidal wars described in the Old Testament. Racial and civil wars are without doubt the most vicious and ferocious, and World War Two in the West was a European civil war, while the Pacific portion of this clash was undoubtedly racial to a very large degree. Especially repulsive was the extent to which the war was visited upon the non-combatant populations, to a far greater degree by the winners than the losers, and on a scale which would have paralyzed the relatively civilized soldiers of the Eighteenth Century, for example, with horror-stricken disbelief.

General Fuller advanced additional characteristics of World War Two which were especially ominous

in their degenerative consequences, among them the utter absence of war aims among the ultimate victors other than sheer annihilation of their adversaries, which in his view put the "United Nations" in the same camp with the Mongols of the Thirteenth Century. Another was the mindless pre-occupation with remorseless severity in the treatment of the losing peoples after the war was over, pursued with a pitiless and ruthless diligence matching anything ever known in the past, and in many respects exceeding previous achievements in unrestrained barbarousness.¹

Planned Inhumanity

The salient factor attending the course of the vindictiveness and inhumanity was its planned character. The incredible excesses which marked the four years after the end of hostilities in the spring of 1945 in Europe were not simply the consequence of impulsive exuberance and unthinking and rash enormities which have marked the temporary behavior of conquerors for millenia. In this case a deliberate and sweeping program had been worked out well in advance. To a large degree this extensive plan was made possible by the prior adoption of a policy of never negotiating or dealing with the enemy except on the basis of abject and total submission, the famous counsel of insanity known as



"unconditional surrender." This fateful course grew out of one of the many wartime meetings by the major chiefs of state among the "United Nations" where the war was progressively enlarged, deepened and expanded. This one was the Casablanca meeting in North Africa, January 14-24, 1943, where this doctrine, a serious misconception of history to begin with, was propounded by President Roosevelt of the United States.²

There were many dire threats directed at the German and Japanese during the early years of the war, suggesting the ultimate wreaking of a Carthaginian settlement following their defeat. But nothing of substance appeared until the fall of 1944, when it was obvious to the world that both these powers were hopelessly eclipsed and their subjection merely a matter of time. It was long past the time when peace should have been negotiated, an event which would have made unnecessary most of the death and destruction, especially had it been done as early as mid-1943, when it certainly was possible had the war been fought in a rational manner by the "United Nations," something which obviously was not done, as General Fuller points out.

Pillage and Murder

What was in the minds of some strategically located people however was not only a war fought to unconditional surrender of the enemy but the continuation afterward of a calculated and massive program of murder, pillage, and destruction, especially aimed at the Germans. This had already been substantially predicted by the campaign of strategic bombing of that country, which destroyed its seventy largest cities, killed and wounded millions, made even more millions homeless and wretched, and produced damage

of such appalling dimensions that if one did not actually see it, one can never grasp its totality, no matter how many pictures one examines.

This area bombing program, begun by the English and maximized by Americans, and defended and apologized for by many of those with a personal stake in it, has been drastically attacked by other Englishmen, notably General Fuller, Veale, and Captain B. H. Liddell Hart,³ as action which would have disgraced Attila or Tamerlane. Its failure to break German morale or to inhibit to any significant degree the index of German war production has been documented for two decades. But one of its important consequences was its contribution to softening up public opinion and making easy and unopposed the grim post-war mentality and frightful programs of the "occupation."

The most important proposal among the predetermined schemes for the permanent reduction of the German enemy came from the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, Henry Morgenthau, until the last nine months of the war a quite obscure figure in FDR's war machine. But his plan for the partitioning, devastation, pillaging and pastoralization of Germany which was made public in October, 1944 soon made him notorious. According to his postwar account in the *New York Post* in 1947-48 he originated his program for ruthless vengeance on a trip to England early in 1944, claiming to have gained some sympathy from Anthony Eden and General Eisenhower. On his return to the U.S., Morgenthau set up a Treasury committee consisting of Harry Dexter White, John Pehle and Ansel Luxford to create what was to become known as the Morgenthau Plan. White's deep Communist connections have been heavily documented.

Planned for Soviet Control

Space prohibits listing the multiple provisions of this infamous document⁴ but its major stipulations included the separation of several areas of Germany for attachment to Poland and France, including East Prussia, much of Silesia, the Saar and much of the west bank of the Rhine, and the partitioning of the rest of the country into northern and southern states. There was also to be an "international zone," which was to include the industrial heart of the country, the Ruhr, and the major coastal cities and southern Rhine. Six months after the end of the war, all industry in this region was to be systematically destroyed, or dismantled and shipped to the lands of its enemies in the war. Furthermore, all the mines in Germany were to be stripped of machinery and permanently closed, presumably by flooding. Other plans for restitution and reparations included provisions for forced labor of Germans outside their country, in addition to transfer of machinery, plants and other equipment, and confiscation of German properties in other parts of the world. A complicated system for the occupation and policing of the German states, in effect, provided for domination of the entire region by Soviet Russia.

By providing that a quarter of the arable land of the country be assigned to other lands, and its entire industry, mining and ship building looted or destroyed, in essence the Morgenthau Plan was a contrivance designed to starve to death thirty million people in Germany, by forcing it to become a strictly pastoral and agricultural country.

More unbelievable was that this incredible proposition was assented to and initialed by both Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in their meeting in Quebec on September 15,

1944, with Morgenthau in attendance and his principal opponents absent. "How a plot of such pre-medieval vindictiveness could be seriously considered by supposedly 'liberal' twentieth-century statesmen is not easy to understand," wrote George N. Crocker, in his *Roosevelt's Road to Russia*.⁵ But Morgenthau and his plan persisted in all its major features, despite the horrified reaction of the Secretaries of State and War, Cordell Hull and Henry L. Stimson, who managed to effect only very modest changes in Roosevelt's support of Morgenthau. Eventually one finds the essence of the Morgenthau Plan incorporated in the basic regulations for the administration of occupied Germany in the Joint Chiefs of Staff direction No. 1067 (along with the supplementary JCS 1779), prepared by the American High Commissioner in Germany, John J. McCloy. Only Morgenthau's prescription involving the total destruction of Germany's mines failed to be realized in post-war operational reality. (One may read the entire plan in the first four pages of Morgenthau's book *Germany Is Our Problem*, New York: Harper, 1945.)

Hatched at Yalta

Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at the Crimea (Yalta) Conference of February 7-12, 1945 and Harry S. Truman, Clement Attlee and Stalin at the Potsdam Conference of July 17-August 2, 1945 completed the arrangements which represented the functional side of the Morgenthau Plan. Here were worked out the massive territorial transfers, the provisions for the expulsion of fourteen million people, and the agreements for the looting or demolition of the major part of Germany's industry. All this followed in the three years after the cessation of hostilities in May, 1945. What had been the east-

ern part of Germany was ultimately incorporated into Poland, while the central regions of Germany became known as "East" Germany, ultimately a Soviet satellite state, which it remains to this day. Into the truncated remainder were driven the millions of ethnic Germans ripped from their homes in the East and from the Sudeten section of Czechoslovakia, in the main. This latter was without doubt the most barbarous event in the history of Europe, accompanied by outrageous indignities, torture, robberies, rapes and brutal murders in the many millions. Many did not get there for other reasons: they were retained as slave labor in Soviet-occupied areas and elsewhere, along with many war prisoners.

Paralleling them was a reverse flow of forcibly repatriated Russians and other East European people who had escaped the Soviet during the war and whose return was insisted upon by the Communist leaders. The ferocious methods used by American and British troops to drive these unhappy elements back to execution or to the vile and miserable existence of slave laborers have been described most effectively by Julius Epstein in his book *Operation Keelhaul* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1973).

Planned Degradation

The living conditions of the masses of people crammed into the western regions of Germany in the years immediately after the war almost beggar description. It is rare that one ever sees an animal forced to endure under such degraded and forlorn circumstances. Especially revealing in the first two years were the books by the courageous British publisher, Victor Gollancz, *In Darkest Germany* (Chicago: Regnery, 1947) and *Our Threatened Values* (Chicago: Regnery, 1948), documents unmatched elsewhere in the

English speaking world in disclosing the incredibly inhuman situation prevailing in the German zones administered by the British, Americans and French. The situation in the Soviet zone can only be imagined, as the "iron curtain" about which Churchill spoke so dramatically in his Fulton, Missouri speech in March, 1946 had already settled into place. (It was the German propaganda minister Josef Goebbels who saw the iron curtain descending over a year before, as propounded in his editorial in the February 23, 1945 issue of *Das Reich* where the expression apparently first appeared, at a time when Churchill was delivering fulsome speeches in praise of Stalin.)

Undoubtedly the evolution of the Cold War had much to do with the gradual abandonment of this monstrous program of turning what was left of Germany into one vast concentration camp of starvation and physical misery in the midst of devastation and ruin unparalleled in scope before or since. Ultimately, as Chamberlain says, the cost to American taxpayers of running postwar Germany according to the Old Testament instead of the New was more than a billion dollars a year for some time, and the exaction of this frightful measure of revenge just narrowly missed making all of Germany a Stalinist puppet state. The world may never again see a Morgenthau Plan, but it really cannot afford ever to allow another one to be proposed.

REFERENCES

¹Of first rank in importance relating to this phenomenon and its likely consequences is F.J.P. Veale, *Advance to Barbarism: How the Reversion to Barbarism in Warfare and War-Trials Menaces Our Future* (Appleton, Wisconsin: C.C. Nelson, 1953; New York: Devin-Adair, 1968).

²Particularly useful in analyzing the unbelievable disorder this casually-tossed-off dictum produced in Europe in the last 2½ years of the war and after are F.O. Miksche, *Unconditional Surrender*

(London: Faber, 1952) and Anne Armstrong, *Unconditional Surrender* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, 1961). Roosevelt believed that "unconditional surrender" was inflicted upon the Confederacy by General U.S. Grant in 1865 when in reality it was just his demand upon the commander of one of the Tennessee River forts in a minor campaign in February of 1862.

³A library full of propaganda was prepared by English and American Anglophile journalists and official flacks from 1940 on which trembled with ecstasy over the so-called Battle of Britain, while hitting the Germans with tidal waves of righteous but hollow moralizing about the bombing of England. Overlooked has been Liddell Hart's *The Revolution in Warfare* (London: Faber, 1946) in

which book and elsewhere he established that the repeated bombing of Germany by the Royal Air Force preceded both the daylight and night time bombings of England by the Germans.

⁴An excellent account of the Morgenthau Plan can be found in William Henry Chamberlin, *America's Second Crusade* (Chicago: Regnery, 1950, 1962); this is still the best revisionist account of American involvement in World War Two, and since 1967 has been obtainable from Ralph Myles Publisher, Colorado Springs, Colo. 80901.

⁵(Chicago: Regnery, 1959), p. 232. There is a superb account of the origins of the Morgenthau Plan and its presentation at the Quebec conference in this brilliantly written book.

Robert Welch and the Tax Rebellion

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billion; that revenue-sharing, recently instituted by Nixon, now involves annual expenditures of about \$6 billion; that the mere cost of the federal bureaucracy is about \$60 billion; and that loopholes in the Internal Revenue Code are costing the Treasury about \$70 billion a year.

Perhaps these sums are beyond the comprehension of the members of the John Birch Society—but then who could understand them? Does Mr. Welch refrain from mentioning these definite and astronomical expenditures—all without warrant in the Constitution—because he might offend some one who reaps personal benefit from them?

Placing the Blame

Interestingly enough, even though it was under such Democrats as Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson that the greatest betrayals of the American people took place, I have searched in vain in John Birch Society literature for analyses and condemnations of their administrations and policies. Just

whom is Welch defending and whom is he denouncing—i.e., in addition to the tax-rebels?

Interestingly enough also, in his Phoenix speech, Mr. Welch seemed more intent upon defending himself against the charge of anti-semitism than in reducing taxes or the size of the federal government. I came away with the impression that he is nit-picking; that he avoids or fails to understand the basic issues before us; and, finally, that he is interested primarily in maintaining his own organization at any price, controlling the revenues it produces, and remaining the sole dictator of its ideology and policies.

The fact that he would single me out for a personal attack while all other enemies of his Truth remain anonymous, should tell us something. Have we indeed come to the pass where the only identifiable enemy of the John Birch Society and constitutional government is the historian who has written sympathetically concerning the basic causes of the tax revolt and the principal personalities involved in this patriotic movement?